

OFFICE OF SPECIAL NEEDS
SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

**NORTH AMERICAN FAMILY INSTITUTE
ADOLESCENT COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE
(NAFI/ACE)**

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2000

SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Introduction

The purpose of the School Support System (SSS) is to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services for students with disabilities. The SSS model is designed to promote the involvement of the non-public school (or state agency) special educators and parents. It is designed to learn if the non-public school (or state agency) meets the minimum regulations and what effects the programs and services have on student performances. Finally, the SSS develops a support plan for training and technical assistance.

To accomplish this, the SSS includes these components:

- ♦ The Orientation Meeting The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) staff meets with the Non-Public Special Education School (or State Agency) representatives to plan the site visit and identify issues or initiatives that may influence programs or service delivery.
- ♦ Data Analysis Meeting The RIDE staff meets to review demographic information on selected reports including: Non-Public (or State Agency) Special Education School Application for Approval, census information, and information collected through record review, staff questionnaires and parent interviews. To ensure that the child is at the center of the study, all analyses begin with the child. Thus, a sample of approximately 5 to 10 percent of students with disabilities is selected; the records of these students are reviewed; their parents, teachers and related service providers are interviewed; and their classrooms are observed. The result is an in-depth, unified examination of the actual provision of programs and services for students with disabilities. The RIDE staff compiles a preliminary summary of their analyses of these data.
- ♦ Presentation by the Non-Public (or State Agency) Special Education School and School Site Visit The site visit begins with a presentation of programs by staff. The presentation provides the visiting team with general and specific information on delivery of programs and services to students. Following this presentation, visits to the school are made. The team members interview school administrators and teaching staff. The team gathers sufficient information and works with the Non-Public (or State Agency) Special Education School personnel to generate a report covering the following:
 - The school's (or state agency's) compliance with the state and federal regulations, relative to the education of students with disabilities.
 - The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the school (or state agency).
 - The need for professional development and technical assistance that will enable the school (or state agency) to improve programs and services.

- ♦ The Support Plan The RIDE team and the Non-Public (or State Agency) Special Education School administrator(s) meet to review the data and complete a report of results. The group designs a support plan with timelines for implementation. This plan enables the school (or state agency) to correct areas of non-compliance and to strengthen promising programs and correct areas of weakness in order to improve services and programs for all students.
- ♦ The SSS Report The report summarizes the findings from the various data sources. The format of the report uses four divisions: indicators, findings, documentation and support plan. Indicators either describe performance or compliance. Findings can include a variety of some fifteen categories, from school improvement to the least restrictive environment. The documentation section of the report distinguishes the source of the finding. The support plan reflects the response to the described findings. The support plan describes the corrective action required by the school (or state agency) as well as that RIDE will assist the school (or state agency) to improve programs and services.

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>The NAFI ACE Program is a secure residential school/treatment program serving up to twenty-two (22) court adjudicated youths, ages thirteen (13) through eighteen (18). ACE program placements average in length of stay from nine (9) to twelve (12) months.</p> <p>The ACE program combines residential, school, and clinical services using a "Normative Model." This approach operates with the premise that people can change, if they choose to. Norms have been developed guiding students and staff in all aspects of daily living and work. ACE operates as a <u>community</u>, determining and carrying out norms of living and conduct designed to teach acceptable, beneficial, responsible, mutually supportable behavior. The process includes flexibility to modify norms, similar to societal modifications. School Support Team witnessed the process of normative culture being implemented through a daily group meeting. Residents and staff discussed issues and concerns attempting to hold each other accountable for responsible and respectful behavior. School Support Team observed the technique of saying "support" which allows more opportunity for thoughtful expression rather than spontaneous/frequent interruptions.</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Documentation</p>	
Performance	<p>The ACE Program is a state approved private regular education school with a special education resource component. Within the context of a secure residential program, the special education program provides a minimal pull-out from the regular education instruction. The special education teacher is certified in both special education and regular education (secondary social studies). The special education teacher provides consultation to regular education teachers as well as resource and direct instruction to students with IEP's.</p>	<p>Staff Surveys</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Staff Interviews</p> <p>On-Site Observation</p>	

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES (continued)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	The ACE Program provides instruction in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Health, Art, Computers, Culinary Arts, and Carpentry. The School Support Team observed and interviewed students who believe their educational programs is tailored to their specific needs, and conducted at their pace of learning. Students appear to receive more individualized instruction from teaching staff. Teacher pupil ratios appear low 3 to 4:1.	Documentation Student Interviews On-Site Observation	
Performance	Since the ACE Program is an approved private regular education school, all staff with undergraduate degrees are encouraged to offer course electives. Staff currently offer Art, Carpentry, Pottery, History of Sports, Military History, Short Stories, Video Production, and Drumming. Electives are offered primarily during a second day shift which, in turn, allows more student contact with the academic teachers.	Presentation Staff interviews On-Site Observation Documentation	
Performance	The ACE Program ties both required and elective courses through reading skills/comprehension, language skills/writing, computer instruction. The ACE Program provides monthly field trips which are linked to weekly academic assignments. Field trips include Mystic Seaport - Amistad, Plymouth Plantation/Mayflower, Pequot Museum, Boston Science Museum, New York City and Newport, RI.	Presentation Documentation On-Site Observation	

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES (continued)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	ACE uses a daily calendar which provides academic and elective programming, plus internal ACE Community Meetings and recreational activities from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ACE student progress is recorded by a weekly credit system, broken down into academic, clinical, and experiential categories. ACE students earn school credits which can be transferred to public or private schools. Each student also receives quarterly progress reports which are part of permanent student records.	Presentation Documentation	
Performance	The ACE Program displays prominently student art murals, which have also been exhibited offsite. One of these murals was connected to a Drug Free program/contest and exhibited in Washington, DC. The ACE Program also display prominently field trip photos, written work and other art projects.	On-Site Observation	
Performance/ Compliance	The School Support Team commends the ACE Program and its carpentry instructor. The carpentry teacher donated his own equipment, works with two (2) students at a time and provides linkages between mathematics skills/problem-solving and the use and development of student determined projects. This instructor also volunteers additional time for students.	Presentation On-Site Observation	The ACE Program should seek additional room and materials for this course. The location of the carpentry room is not accessible for persons with mobility impairments. Additional or reallocated space must be considered.

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES (continued)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	The ACE Program includes as part of its rationale and integrated with normative culture and academics, <u>Community Service</u> projects. Some of these include Amos House (homeless shelter), Cranston Senior Center, Friendship Center (day care), Food Pantry (North Kingstown, RI) and Landscaping at the ACE site (Cranston).	Presentation Documentation	
Performance	The ACE Program students along with adolescent residents in five (5) other Rhode Island programs (Challenges [Pawtucket], Main Street [Warren], Oakland Beach [Warwick], Professional Parent Programs [Statewide], and TR-ACE [Statewide]) compose a variety of topical articles for the NAFI newspaper, entitled the <i>Continuum Chronicle</i> . The newspaper provides another medium for promoting both educational and a Normative Behavioral Culture. This example blends a variety of topical activities, writing composition, while promoting the understanding of the NAFI ACE (Continuum Programs), program norms -- Respect -- Responsibility and Rebound (learning from mistakes).	Documentation Presentation On-Site Observation Staff Interviews Student Interviews	

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FAPE/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>The ACE Program's Normative System working through a community/group approach appears to reduce extreme confrontational incidents. Instructional, clinical, and support staff appear to understand and practice parallel normative processes preventing the appearance of hypocrisy.</p> <p>Staff learn steps/levels of confrontation which, in turn, emphasize realistic, and enforceable expectations. Instructional staff appear to desire additional professional development opportunities to improve competencies.</p>	<p>On-site observation</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>Staff Surveys</p>	<p>The ACE Program may want to survey teaching staff to more specifically target educational topics for training and/or supported outside courses.</p>

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FAPE/IEP

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>NAFI/ACE Education Coordinator/Special Education Director pursues obtaining school records expeditiously and has developed good rapport with school district special education personnel.</p> <p>NAFI ACE Educational Coordinator shares all school information with teachers. Teachers who suspect students might need additional support or special education services communicate readily with the Educational Coordinator. Teachers observe students closely for more specific difficulties, and complete observation forms for the Educational Coordinator. Completed forms are discussed among the teaching staff. If a student demonstrates difficulties in specific areas consistently, possible classroom interventions are discussed with guidance from the special education teacher. Teachers will follow-up with completing a History of Classroom Interventions form. Acting as a team, and sharing this information with parents, including educational advocates, any of the persons may, in turn, refer a student to a Special Education Team (MDT). NAFI ACE MDT's include the Educational Coordinator/Special Education Director, consultant, school psychologist, regular and special education teachers, social worker, and parents (including educational advocates).</p> <p>NAFI ACE does upon occasion determine a Section 504 eligibility, particularly if only a related service is required. The same team is used to formulate a Section 504 Plan.</p>	<p>Staff interviews</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Parent interviews</p>	

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FAPE – PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance/ Compliance	Based on analysis of the complaint/mediation/and hearing system within the last five years, NAFI/ACE appears to resolve the majority of issues at the school level.	RIDE Complaint Management and Hearing Systems Parent Interviews	

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FAPE/TRANSITION

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>NAFI, Inc. provides a "Rhode Island Continuum" blending educational (ACE Program) with residential options and outreach services. One of these services is identified as TR-ACE. It's purpose and functions connect ACE students in their last month to transitioning to home, community, and other NAFI Group Homes, supervised apartment, and foster care placements.</p> <p>NAFI, Inc. is to be commended for using its Normative Model across this continuum and for blending its educational/community services as a common thread. This is particularly helpful in reintegrating ACE students back into school districts (e.g. Warwick and Bristol-Warren). Some school district staff have also asked to observe NAFI ACE operations. There appears to be a trend of fewer NAFI ACE students returning to the Rhode Island Training School.</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Staff interviews</p>	<p>NAFI ACE should recommend adding to current Rhode Island DCYF contracts additional staffing/time for school district staff observation and training.</p>

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PARENT PARTICIPATION

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	NAFI ACE Program has initiated a Parent Support Group promoting expanded communication and instruction regarding parenting, stress reduction, and behavioral approaches. Parents appear satisfied with the Normative Model and frequent communication of both academic and behavioral progress.	Parent interviews Documentation Student Record Reviews	NAFI ACE may want to try parent/customer satisfaction surveys. Results could be used to influence determining program/service priorities.